Title: Need to review the decision for setting up tanneries and paper mills at Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu to check environmental pollution in the area.

SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM (VELLORE): Our founder leader of Pattali Makkal Katchi has pointed out that the river Palar situated in Vellore district used to supply good drinking water to 30 towns on its banks and 50 villages surrounding it. The Palar river water was also used by the villagers to cultivate their land. Now, there are a number of tanneries on the banks of the river Palar. They let out the effluents in the Palar river. So, now the river water in Palar has been polluted and it is not useful for drinking or agricultural purposes. Due to pollution the people are suffering from a number of diseases like asthma, skin disease and stomach ailment, etc. Thousands of acres of fertile land have become waste land and it is not used for cultivation. Sheshaiyee paper Mill in Erode District on the banks of Kaveri river is also polluting the river.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has evolved a plan to establish an industrial estate in Cuddalore District exclusively for tanneries and paper mills. As per G.O. No.179, issued on 30.6.97, the proposed industrial estate is to be set up on the cultivable lands of the villages like Andar Mulli Pallam Kayalapattu, Periyapattu and Silambi Manglam. The Revenue Department has initiated the process of taking over about 2400 acres of land and it would affect about 15000 small farmers and agricultural labourers.

If the industrial estate is allowed to function at Cuddalore District, the effluents from the tanneries and paper mills would cause environmental pollution problems. The subsoil water will be polluted and we will have to face good drinking water problem in 40 villages. The Supreme Court of India has also given a verdict that new tanneries should not be started hereafter.

* Translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.

So, we urge upon the Union Government to take up this matter with the State Administration to safeguard the interests of the villagers of these areas in Tamil Nadu.